

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

CONFERENCE *connection*

Alabama • Georgia
Mississippi • South Carolina • Tennessee • NW Florida

SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

January 5, 2021

Seeing What Can Be

Liturgically, we begin the season of Epiphany with the story of the Magi following a star, traveling to find something that they knew would be significant and even change the world. They did not know exactly how this change would happen. Yet they were persistent and willing to risk a long journey, into unknown territory to experience and give witness to this phenomenon.

For many of us, we enter this new calendar year wanting to let go of the past months and hope for change. Yet, we know that there are still months ahead of wearing masks, social distancing, online worship, unemployment, depression, etc. However, the turning of the calendar offers an opportunity for us to reflect. The pandemic has unveiled some realities we had easily ignored: how much we are interconnected; the importance of family and community; the vulnerability of a large part of our society and the world; the injustices within our systems; and the fragileness of our environment. It has deepened the quest for understanding what it means to be communities of faith. Yet there is so much to celebrate as our resilience and trust in God keep us moving forward. It is a time to imagine what is possible; what can be. Reflecting on the difficult times this past year, for what are we grateful? What have we learned about ourselves and our community of faith that we celebrate?

As the Magi in our scripture we, as individuals, communities of faith and the SEC Conference, continue the journey into unknown territory. The star we seek to follow is the way of Jesus that will lead us through the uncertainties. Like the Magi, may we follow with a sense of wonder. May we take time to



move beyond fears and disappointments, seeking a sense of wonder which will open our creativity and insights. A sense of wonder opens possibilities of seeing God in our midst, while working with God to create a better world for all of God's children. The question to ponder - how might we do this together as the Southeast Conference?

Blessings, Char Burch
Transitional Conference Minister

News from the Conference Office

From the Generosity Coordinator

Welcome to 2021. We made it thru 2020 with some loss, some suffering, lots of uncertainty, BUT, we made it! We also made progress in connecting thru technology. We learned to meet virtually for meetings, for training, for worship, and for conducting business...all things that we resisted for so long were finally put into play. What an amazing educational adventure 2020 has been.

There were two Transforming Churches Transforming Lives grants awarded. Those churches are:

1. Pleasant Hill UCC, Pleasant Hill, TN
2. Midway Congregation UCC, Midway, GA.

Let us CONGRATULATE them and wish them Godspeed as they remain faithful with their work in the United Church of Christ.

Cycle one 2021 Transforming Churches Transforming Lives grants applications will be available on January 20, 2021. This cycle will end on March 3, 2021. Should you have questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me directly. Please review the guidelines on our website: secucc.org. Please follow the guidelines when applying.

Our prayer for 2021 is that we not get weary in doing well. We are praying for a cure for Covid-19 and an end to this pandemic. We continue to pray for all those infected with and affected by this deadly virus. Let us all remain steadfast in our faith and our commitments, and let us continue to show love and compassion to all.



We are grateful to all of you for your continued support of this, Southeast Conference United Church of Christ!! Thank you for your financial support. Our books for 2020 will close on January 11th. Please make sure your contributions reach our office by the close of business to be credited for 2020, otherwise it will be credited to your 2021 account.

Again, THANK YOU for all the ways you continue to support this denomination.

I am looking forward to our work together, and hopefully, we will be able to meet in person for worship, meetings, and fellowship.

LOVE AND BLESSINGS, as we continue to Journey,
Min. Carrole

Last Minute Reminder: 2020 Financial Deadline is January 11

All 2020 OCWM and UCC Special Offering checks must **arrive at the Conference Office by January 11** to receive credit for 2020 Giving. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Heather Fosburgh at hforburgh@secucc.org or 404-719-6572.



UCC Yearbook Reporting Opens on Thursday

It is that time of the year again! Instructions for Yearbook information

collection will be emailed and hard copy mailed to each church this coming Thursday, January 7 when the Data Hub opens for you to be able to enter your church's information for 2020. If you do not receive an email by Friday, January 8, 2021 please reach out the Heather at hfosburgh@secucc.org because that probably means we do not have a valid email.

[You can use the form found here](#) to prepare for the yearbook. It includes both the data you will be asked to provide and the supplemental questions that help with the research the National Setting is currently doing. This research helps the National Setting identify areas they can support the work of local churches and Conferences. [Click here to learn more about the Yearbook.](#)

Annual Clergy Information Review

Calling all Ministers: Ordained, Licensed, and Commissioned! The time has come once again for you to fill out your Annual Information Review. This year's form, which looks back on 2020, helps the Conference and the National Setting have the correct and current information on you and your ministry. It also allows the Conference to identify how we can better support you in your ministry. Please [either fill out the form online](#) or [download and fill in the PDF](#) and return it to the Conference Office by February 28.

Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders

- **Monday, January 25, 7 pm Eastern/6 pm Central**

We will gather at the end of January to reflect on pandemic changes and how they might impact the life of our local churches. There is also the question about what current practices churches might maintain into the future. We invite all Moderators, Church Leaders, and Clergy to be part of the conversation. [REGISTER](#)

Clergy Zoom Connections for January

- **An Hour of Conversations and Prayer**

Tuesday, January 5, 12, 19, 26 - 11:00 a.m. Eastern (10:00 a.m. Central); Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/479440102>

- **Live Harp Meditations for Ministers**

Thursday, January 21- 12:00 p.m. Eastern (11:00 Central)
20 minutes of meditation with Celtic harp. Silent prayer and reflection following if desired, facilitated by Rev. Jean Norton. (For questions or to sign up for individual Therapeutic Harp Sessions, contact Jean at HeartSongJean@gmail.com.)
Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/96976838422>



Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2020. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of January 3

- Bethany Congregational UCC; Thomasville, Georgia
- Donna Farrar
- Leo Maley
- Dale Marshall
- Kim Sorrells
- C. George

Week of January 10

- Victory for the World Church; Stone Mountain, Georgia
- Susie Smith
- Andrew Young
- Jerry Gladson
- Steven P. Miller

Prayer Requests

- We were saddened to hear about the sudden passing of the brother of **Rev. Johnny R. "JR" Finney II**, pastor of Covenant Community Church, Birmingham AL on December 28 due to a tragic accident. Please keep JR and his family in prayer.
- We received word of the death of **Rev. Diantha Brown**. Rev. Brown served First United Church, UCC, Belvidere TN from 2009 through 2011. She spent the last years of her retirement in St. Paul, MN. We thank God for her ministry and offer prayers to her family.

Clergy Transitions

- We welcome the **Rev. John Fairless** who began January 1 as the Interim Pastor at Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill TN. Rev. Fairless is coming from Gainesville, FL and holds UCC ministerial standing in the Florida Conference.

Churches in Transition

First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Rush Memorial, Atlanta GA; United Church of Cookeville, Cookeville TN; Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill TN

News from the Wider Church

January 31 – CHHM Sunday Resources

This is an opportunity to lift up some special ministries that happen on behalf of the UCC beyond the local church. The UCC Council for Health and Human Service Ministries represents many of these UCC ministries. Worship resources are available for download which include a Litany of Gratitude for Essential Workers. [Health and Human Service Sunday webpage.](#)



Local Church News

Georgia Clergy and Laity Pen Open Letter to Senator Loeffler

In support of an open letter from over 100 Black Pastors and other interfaith leaders presented to Senator Kelly Loeffler of Georgia, an open letter from clergy and laity from predominantly White congregations was published on January 2, 2021 in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution newspaper. The letter, which garnered multi-denominational participation from across the state, was started by some members of the Practical Theology Adult Class at Central Congregational UCC in Atlanta.

One of the leaders of the drive to create the letter, Rev. Joyce B. Myers-Brown, states “we feel that it is imperative for us, as White Christians, to add our names in support of the Letter from the 100+ Black Pastors. It would be a grave mistake to think that only the Black Church finds Loeffler’s rhetoric objectionable and a gross attack on our sisters and brothers in Christ.” [Read the full letter on our website.](#)

Trainings and Conferences



The Cultivating Generous Congregations Seminar for Pastors and Lay Leaders

This seminar offers an opportunity to explore faithful, practical, and tested ways to promote generosity in your congregation. The Seminar will draw on current research, guidance from the wisdom of scripture, and discussion of the best practices in church-based fundraising. The Cultivating Generous Congregations Seminar for 2021 will include six online sessions and will be taught by the Rev. Andy DeBraber and Rev. Andrew Warner, Generosity Officers of the national setting. Tuesdays – Feb. 9, Feb. 23, Mar. 9, Mar. 23,

Apr. 13, and Apr. 23: 6:30pm Eastern to 8:00pm Eastern In between class sessions, Andy and Andrew will provide materials to help analyze the culture of your own congregation and learn how to create change. Be sure to recruit at least a team of two for this program. Changing the culture of your congregation requires more than one dedicated leader. Success depends on engaging a team of leaders from your congregation. [REGISTER](#)

Conference Calendar

January 9 @ 10:00 am - 1:00 pm EST

[Board of Directors Retreat](#)

January 12 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

January 19 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

January 20 - March 3

[Spring 2021 Grant Applications Open](#)

January 21 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm EST

[Commission on Ministry Meeting](#)

January 22 - January 23

[Virtual MID Retreat](#)

January 25 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST

[Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders](#)

January 26 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

View the **full calendar** of events online: <https://www.secucc.org/events/>

Contact Us

Conference Minister: **Rev. Char Burch**; cburch@secucc.org

Assoc. Conf. Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh**; hfosburgh@secucc.org

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss**; cmoss@secucc.org

Director of Communications: **Don Harris;** dharris@secucc.org

Copyright © 2021 Southeast Conference, UCC, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

